

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, September 5, 1878, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL 37 West Stevart St. Greenock, Sept. 5th, 1878. My darling May:

Your telegram just received is a great disappointment for of course I could not feel comfortable in having you come all this way with a strange woman and have you here alone with her. I would have felt no fear in having you come here alone with Bessie but not with a new and untried girl.

I have been hard at work all the afternoon and evening in Gourock. I find it a beautiful Sea-side town just the place for giving baby rosy cheeks and making you strong too. It is within easy reach of Greenock by horse-car and you seem to be able to get country — mountain and sea blended together — and yet close to a large town. Gounock seems by the style of houses in the upper part of the town to be a favorite resort for gentlemen's families. The people in the horse-care and on the beach seem superior people and the society there is evidently good. The town is built upon the side of a mountain overlooking a bay — and there is no difficulty in getting good accommodations at reasonable prices. I wish you could be here for I would then be quite happy. If you made only here you would probably have more of me than when in London for I should be free after half-past two. I wouldn't mind leaving you in Gourock one bit, for there are evidently ever so many nice people there — and we could make as many acquaintances as we liked among the best people through Mr. and Mrs. MacRae. If Berta were here — My goodness! Why that's an idea. I would not mind your travelling with your new nurse if Berta came too. It would be so nice — but almost too good to think about. I am afraid of another telegram "Can't leave Mama and Sister."

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I wish I could have you all here. Do come darling if you possibly can. If you don't come I shall go to Gonrock myself and flirt with all the pretty girls! — or perhaps flirt with Miss True! I am so glad she is here. She is so much help and we are getting on so well. Do you know dear I think I can be of far more use as a teacher of the deaf than I can ever be as an electrician and if I can only see my way to an income for us out of the Telephone I will work at that work and only invent for recreation.

Miss True and I have already produced order out of chaos -and I think that by the beginning of next week the routine of the schoolroom will be familiar to both teachers and pupils.

I was really afraid of my commencement. It was such a trial to have to commence work in the presence of no less than three sets of parents! What could we expect of babies of five and six years of age? I quite anticipated an ignominious failure. I expected the children to have run to their mammas and have refused me obedience. I thought that when the time came for the children to be left alone with me — we should have had a scene — two kicking babies on the floor screaming to be let out.

However I was fortunate in my initiation and succeeded in interesting the children and gratifying the parents so that we have had only pleasant faces and bright smiles in our schoolroom as yet — and the little things have yielded me ready obedience.

Our schoolroom is the funniest place imaginable. It is the lumber room of the Academy! I have no doubt it will prove a very comfortable schoolroom when it has been emptied and cleaned. At present it is filled with the effects of a deceased writing-matter. Huge piles of copy-books, slates, pens, framed specimens of penmanship, books and bundles of 3 mysterious build — encumber the room. There they are occupying almost all the available space — dust covered and cob-webbed. The ceiling too is covered with cob-webbs and is as black as a coal -celler — and the room has the close musty smell of a place that has been long shut up.

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I hope these defects will be remedied in the course of a few days but at present we dare not even move the “lumber” without the permission of the Trustees of the deceased teacher's property. So we have to carry on our lessons in the spaces between the bundles!!

However we get on pretty comfortably and we are waiting patiently for the promised improvements.

Miss True vows she'll have a reporter come to see the Inventor of the Telephone at work with the children — and threatens to invite Miss Field to Greenock. You would really laugh to see how happy I am in my work. I like teaching little children far better than working at the Telephone. If I could only be relieved of pecuniary anxieties — I should be perfectly happy to devote my life to this work. I do so love little children — and I like nothing better than being among them. I can hardly wait for Elsie to quit the baby stage. It seems such a hardship that she can't be born three or four years of age — for I long to have her old enough for me really to love her. At present I am ashamed to say my affection for her is of a most passive kind. Of course I do like her very much but more because I feel it my duty to do so than from true parental affection — I simulate a great deal more affection than I really feel and I am really grieved at my secret hard-heartedness. I used to have the idea that fathers had an instinctive feeling of affection for their own offspring — but however much I may like Elsie I haven't experienced anything of the kind yet. I really feel quite troubled about this matter — for I want to be a good father to our little one. I often take her up in my arms and nod to her and play with her from a feeling that it's my duty to try and like her — but somehow or other if the truth were told -I have to imagine what she'll be like when she is two or three years old before I can summon up any real feeling of affection for her. I can't manage to love her much as she is — and any little bubbling at the mouth or suspicious noise makes me quite disgusted with her. I want to be all that a father should be to her and I really am grieved and troubled at my inward callousness.

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I must now stop. With much love to sister, Berta, Grandmama and baby. Your loving husband, Alec. Mrs. Bell, 57 Cromwell Rd.